

# PEOPLES PAPER

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## UNCLE BAKSI'S

### VANISHING TRICK



Mr J K Baksi, newcomer to the Hackney backscratching network.

By now everyone knows that Mrs. Michelle O'Connor was sacked from her job as leader of the Bo Peep playgroup for children under five. She was sacked by the Community Relations Council, who in one of their newsletters described Mrs. O'Connor as having considerable experience with young children and being also a qualified and experienced art teacher. Why if she is so good have the Community Relations council sacked her? Is the CRC very poor in its judgement of people or were they just being hypocritical when they first appointed her. The 'offences' which led to her dismissal, we are being asked to believe were to refuse to keep a staff register and staff holiday rota and refusing to cooperate with the CRC. Her assistants resigned in sympathy.

All this is almost stale news but the Peoples Group have been doing some digging into the background of this story. It seems that the real cause of her dismissal was pressure from certain members of the Health Department who disapprove of 'untrained' playgroup leaders. Prominent among this group of local bureaucrats is a Mrs. Frances Goldhill recently attached to the Health Dept. She used to be Hackney's Borough Representative for the Pre-School Playgroups Association. Now that she has been appointed Borough Playgroups organiser she seems to have seen her job as weeding out all those who had not previously attended her course regardless of their day to day experience. This course by the way lasts for a year, one day a week which more or less rules out any working woman from taking it and so take the strain off other working mothers in the area. You may also be surprised to know that this course is no longer being run in Hackney. Last year there was one run by Mrs. Anita Crompton but it seems that this also was closed by the Pre-School Playgroups Ass. and (you've guessed) Mrs. Frances Goldhill. Mrs. Crompton did not have the required qualifications.

Of course everyone knows that an area like Hackney is so well provided with facilities for playgroups that we can afford to keep on closing them down on the whim of some council official without taking any notice of the wishes of the people in the area. It is rumoured that there may be as many as 20 playgroups in Hackney, mostly run by hardworking and dedicated people untrained in the formal sense. These are people who live in this area, who know its problems and are prepared to a break to working mothers. Of course even the most experienced workers can benefit from training, but unless the council can find a way of making the training relevant to the actual needs of playgroup workers, and persuading them to take the course over the years, it had better stay in the council offices and never come out again. That goes for the Community Relations Council as well for as far as we can judge its just as excuse for various big-nobs, uncle toms and fat social workers to get together and pat one another on the back at the endless series of social evenings they keep having (by the way you are paying for that as well).

The worst of the matter is that this probably by no means the only example of the Council interfering with local groups. A group of mothers on the Kingsmead estate used to meet for a 'Mums Club' every fortnight. But an official from the Health Dept. discouraged the formation of a playgroup on the grounds that there was no suitable leader. All this talk of leaders makes one wonder what the council are afraid of - do they think Hackney mothers are incapable of looking after their own kids or maybe that they can't organise anything themselves?

Finally we hope that Mrs. Frances Goldhills' eyes are not on the De Beauvoir playgroup. Mrs. Sheila Thatcher a very talented worker with children was told at first that she would have to go on a HPA course but it seems she no longer has to. That is good, but if it can be done in one case why not in another?

Let's hope the Health Dept and the CRC get the message, your job is to help people to set these things up by providing money, facilities and maybe advice based on other peoples experience. You are not there to interfere with bureaucratic arrogance and middle-class attitudes, serving the people means just what it says. You might care to regard this as a kind of warning, we are watching and waiting.

## A word from our sponsor.

It is now obvious that the People's Paper is a real force for change in the community. This sounds like boasting, but we are only too well aware of our deficiencies. A common criticism of the people who produce the paper is that we are a closed circle. Yet we have always offered the use of the paper to sincere people who want to expose local scandals or injustices and all too frequently they have failed to deliver the goods. Again, we are often criticised by people in the know (and they know who we mean) that we never mentioned this or that injustice. They assume that we are supposed to be everywhere - that it is our job to do the exposing (in the same breath saying we are an exclusive clique). If these people know of something then it is their job to write about it and to publish it, in this paper or any other. If they fail to do this then they are nothing but hypocrites (what's more their constant carping about our deficiencies, including the typing, becomes really insulting). You have to choose whose side you are on; and having chosen, act.

Even though we are selling most of the 1,000 copies of each edition which gives us a readership of about 2,250, we still have to subsidise the Paper. Consequently we are asking those people who want to see the paper continue and to get bigger and better, to make some kind of donation to the running costs. 25 pence from a hundred people would be a great help. We have so much material to publish we would like to expand to a six page edition.

Finally and most importantly, let there be no misunderstanding about where we stand. We want a total transformation of society - to socialism. We do not believe that the transformation of this society to one where we are not born merely to work for others for the rest of our lives, will be a peaceful one. It is the experience of the whole socialist movement that no ruling class in history has ever voluntarily given up power to the working class. How we fight to make them give up is the history of our movement; the time has come to make our own history rather than to read about it.



Mothers Hospital, Lower Clapton Road, originally built 1913

Our article on the conditions in the two local maternity hospitals in the last edition created quite a stir. Two national newspapers have taken the story up and it looks as though we might be a bit nearer our goal of having the quality of the Hackney Maternity Services subject to a Public Enquiry. A Hackney Maternity Services Action Group has been formed and details can be found elsewhere in this paper about this new group. Typically the Hackney Gazette failed to take note of this important issue, except for a very stupid article on the Women's page which glossed over all our major criticisms. Similarly we have not heard a word from our Labour councillors if they are really concerned about the well-being of Hackney mothers let us see them support our demand for a public enquiry (or is it that some of them might be a little embarrassed by the findings of such an enquiry?)

Anyone interested in the campaign to improve the quality of Hackney maternity services should get in contact with us at Centerprise 34 Dalston Lane E.8. Tel 254 1620. If you know of any individual or organisation that might be interested please tell them to get in touch. Back copies of the previous issue are available from the above address.

G O O

# PRO'S and CONS

## OLD AGE REPORT



When a man's too old or ill to work  
We punish him.  
Half his income is taken away  
Or all of it vanishes and he gets pocket money.

We should reward these tough old humans for surviving,  
Not with a manager's soggy handshake  
Or a medal shaped like an alarm clock -  
No, make them a bit rich,  
Give them the freedom they always heard about  
When the bloody chips were down  
And the blitz or the desert  
Swallowed their friends.

Retire, retire into a fungus basement  
Where nothing moves except the draught  
And the light and dark grey figures  
Doubling their money on the screen;  
Where the cabbages taste like the mummy's hand  
And the meat tastes of feet;  
Where there is nothing to say except:  
'Remember?' or 'Your turn to dust the cat.'

To hell with retiring. Let them advance.  
Give them the money they've always earned  
Or more - and let them choose.  
If Mr Burley wants to be a miser,  
Great, let the moneybags sway and clink for him,  
Pay him a pillowful of best doubloons.  
So Mrs Wells has always longed to travel?  
Print her a season ticket to the universe,  
Let her slum-white skin  
Be tanned by a dozen different planets.  
We could wipe away some of their worry,  
Some of their pain - what I mean  
Is so bloody simple:  
The old people are being robbed  
And punished and we ought  
To be letting them out of their cages  
Into green spaces of enchanting light.

**And thereby hangs a tale . . .** Gaston liked being a peasant. He enjoyed all the things which peasants usually like, elemental things like being born, living and something he looked forward to with oafish pleasure, dying. Often, seated on a sack of blackened truffles in the steam of the peat fire, he would speak of these things:

'We peasants are almost excessively privileged,' he would vouch in the expressive dialect of the Basques, 'in that not only do we delight in the elemental joys of mankind but also in that we are denied the manifold responsibilities accorded will-he will-he to the holder of high office.'

Gaston had lived a long time, seen much, known many, done little. He was sketched eating turnips by Van Gogh. D.H. Lawrence dropped in to talk to him about the blood. He once tried to cheer up Emile Zola. Orwell slept with his pigs for the experience. Ernest Hemingway borrowed his pitchfork. He did not return. He did not return the pitchfork.

A worker during a break for dinner at U.C.S. was talking;

'We'll never forget, we'll not forget that bastard Heath or his toady Davies . . . I'm

him increased productivity does not create more unemployment but solve it.

Nobody who is not lying to himself or to us could miss what is happening. The reason why

## ★ EQUAL ★

## OPPORTUNITY ★ SHOW ★

What is it like to be homeless in Hackney? If you live in private furnished rooms you have a good chance of finding out. During 1968-69, out of a total of 137 people admitted to Hackney welfare accommodation, 97 had been evicted from a private furnished tenancy. You do not have to fall behind with rent through sickness or unemployment in order to become one of those statistics. If the landlord does not like your face, if you complain about the condition of the property, if he wishes to sell the house - he need only serve you with written notice. What about the Rent Act? It only gives you a short period of security during which time you're supposed to be finding another place to live.

Having been served with an eviction order you may well consider yourself homeless but think again. According to Hackney council you are not homeless unless you are totally without accommodation - now - not next week or even tomorrow. So, if you do go along to the Social Services Dept. which they are so proud of advertising, you will be offered little help and left to find a flat for yourself (you are a lame duck you see).

In such circumstances many families, fearing to find themselves on the street, have taken flats which can only be described as rat holes. But having done that you have removed yourself from the statistics sheet - you are no longer homeless - six to a room, damp walls, roof caving in (there's no place like home). Should you still have the determination to complain your case should be taken to the Housing Dept. but since they, despite the recommendations of every single official report, are still insisting on residency qualifications over the need on the housing list, you will get no help from them. Next, the Public Health Inspector. He has the power to compel a landlord to have the repairs carried out and to make him pay. As a last resort the Inspector may even take over the property and collect money for repairs. Doesn't it sound wonderful, home at last. But hold on a minute, how many people do you know who live in slums? How many have been taken over by the council? How many have been repaired lately?

It seems that in our wonderful democratic society the Health Dept. are so jealous of people's rights that they would not dare to interfere with the right of a landlord to exploit us. A landlord is a property owner and property not social justice is what runs our community. Let's get back to the homeless. Should





no just in it for U.C.S. We're fighting for everybody. We're fighting for every man who is standing in the dole queue, we're fighting for every woman that's got a couple of kids to drag up and no money coming in while that rat bag sails his £20,000 boat. We're fighting alongside the miners, the engineers and the factory workers, with every worker. And we're going to sink this lot.

And I'll tell you another thing my friend, if the other lots get back in, they'll have got there with our support. Pity help them if they sell us out again!

The struggles at U.C.S. and Plessey's in Alexandria, the formation of unemployed Worker Committees affiliated to Liverpool Trades Council, and the continuing struggle of many Irish workers against the naked force of British Imperialism are all stages along the same road. They are all aspects of the big battles that workers are having to be involved in.

The figures speak for themselves - almost a million on the dole and its getting worse. The Tory government has said all along that the only way to keep unemployment down is to keep wages down. But although your wages and mine remain low the rate of unemployment still increases.

So, Mr. Davies, speaking at a bosses luncheon has found - 'unproductive workers! Now it seems that those of us who still have a job should work harder for the same money. Here we have it the Tories want us to increase productivity AND increase unemployment. They must think we are all mad (or as stupid as Vic Feather) How is 'Bomber' Carr, the unEmployment Sec. going to explain that away, for according to

the system of private enterprise the major heavy industries are no longer profitable, they need massive amounts of capital injected into them just to maintain a falling rate of profit or else some section of the ruling class must suffer by being forced to sell at knock down prices (thus relieving for a short while the pressure on other capitalists rates of profit) The barrier to this Rationalisation of the Market taking place are the organised workers of Clydeside. They won't let themselves be sold or knocked down to the highest bidder like inanimate machines. This is exactly the way all workers are treated at a time like this, that is the reality of private enterprise.

The usual solution is obviously - screw the workers - and in the past they have usually got away with it. All they needed was a bout of massive anti worker and anti socialist propaganda, the tongue-tied reaction of the so-called labour leaders and they could sit back and watch us starve on the results of their criminal incompetence.

But the battle on the Clyde has today shown us what we can do! We can run the industries that they claim to be bankrupt and we can run them better than they ever knew how. It is up to every worker in this island to show their admiration for the men on the Clyde and to ensure that they do not lose. Their defeat would be a defeat for every working man, woman and child, not only in Scotland but here in this borough. The Clyde workers are showing us that our class can fight back - let us show them that we have got the message and that we are sending our own message to the Tories here and all over the country.

Send messages of support and solidarity, and donations large or small to:

R.G. Mackenzie  
Convenors Office  
Clydebank Division  
CLYDEBANK  
Glasgow.

nowhere to go at all however bad there are always places like that, you might think that the council would then have to rehouse you. Well they might in time. But first you will be taken to what the Social Services Dept. calls Part 111 accommodation, only one such place needs to be quoted - Duncan House, Sheep Lane E.8. (It was meant to be closed in October of last year after a long fight by families who refuse to move out until a firm promise to close it was made. This struggle showed just what working class families are made of in the face of real hardship and also indicates just what Hackney council promises are worth.

You may say only problem families are put in hostels but in the long run we are all problem families to the people whose job it is to provide proper housing for us. It is true that some people do not go into hostels, these include people who require no more than two-bedroom accommodation (so if you have more than one child forget it) and families who are proven good tenants (ever had a row with your landlord) Even if you qualify under one of those headings, the home offered to you will be one considered 'difficult to let' by reason of high rent maybe? If you do get into a hostel (and your chances are better than 50/50) how long you stay there will depend on two factors - your ability to pay the higher charges and the size of your family. For the small family it may be only be three months but for the larger family it may be a year or more. For some, the time in hostels is indefinite because they are classed as unsuitable for rehousing. It seems as though this last section will grow for rising unemployment brings with it debts and in the end despair, the inability to face any more.

Even when you are rehoused your problems do not end. Hackney has a policy known as rehousing according to people's standards. This means in effect that having got down to (some would say having been pushed down) the level of Duncan House, you should never get the chance to improve the standard. You will therefore be rehoused in the council's oldest most dismal property, preferably alongside other ex-homeless families.

That is what it is like to be home-less in Hackney - I hope you never have to try it

**The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can only be attained by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communistic revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win.**

The Communist Manifesto

PLEASE DISPLAY THIS AT WORK OR IN YOUR LOCAL PUB.  
IF YOU DO NOT WANT TO KEEP THIS HISTORIC DOCUMENT, PASS IT ON TO SOMEONE ELSE, OR LEAVE IT A PUBLIC PLACE.

The Editorial Board of the People's paper wish to thank the following for their help and cooperation in the production of this issue: Adrian Mitchell, the Central Committee of the Hackney Miners Federation, Doug and John, Eddie T., Ben and Anna, Hoxton Mick, Paul the Teeth, the landlady at the Allen Arms, Neil S., Arthur Hoyle, Marie and John, Ken, Uncle Baksy, Tom, (because he's our favourite social worker), certain people on the staff of the Hackney Gazette who wish to remain anonymous, Pete's Mum for keeping us fed, Agitprop, Lorraine for the information on the Hackney Maternity Services, Chalkie (good luck in Wales), all other friends and allies.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY BROTHER STEPHEN

THE COMMISSARIAT



## DEFOE NOTES

Do you live in the Defoe Ward of Hackney? If you don't know where that is it's the one with Stoke Newington Church Street running through the middle of it. Do you know who the Councillors for your area are? Ever tried to find them? Well don't bother because Mrs Bessie Benabo, David Gold and Thomas Pugh are not really interested in you either, if they were they would at least have the courtesy to live in the area, as it is they don't even live in Hackney, perhaps they prefer the trendies of Canonbury or Highbury. Just think you might even have voted for them - ever felt cheated?

Facts and Figures: The following figures give details of housing "starts" over the last few years. To read them you would not think we have a waiting list of 16,000. 1965 - 353; 1966 - 463; 1967 - 1,026; 1968 - 1,259; 1969 - 1,137; 1970 - 689. We await with great interest the figures for 1971 - the responsibility of a "socialist" council.

A new Claimants Union has been set up in the Hackney area. If you don't know what a Claimants Union is you will get a good idea from the article in the last People's Paper. These Unions are a vital part of our fight against the Government and its attempts to keep us down. They offer us a method of organising ourselves for an attack on this rotten system. We wish the new one every success and want to assist in a practical way by appealing to our readers to help. The new Union is desperately short of accomodation for itself and the people it represents. They need the use of an office and if possible a telephone for two days a week in the Central Hackney area, if you can be of any assistance please get in touch with Ben Giff, 94 Albion Road, N16. Tel. 249 4820 and remember this: NEVER SEE THE SOCIAL SECURITY PEOPLE ALONE, ALWAYS ASK A MEMBER OF THE CLAIMANTS UNION TO ACCOMPANY YOU.

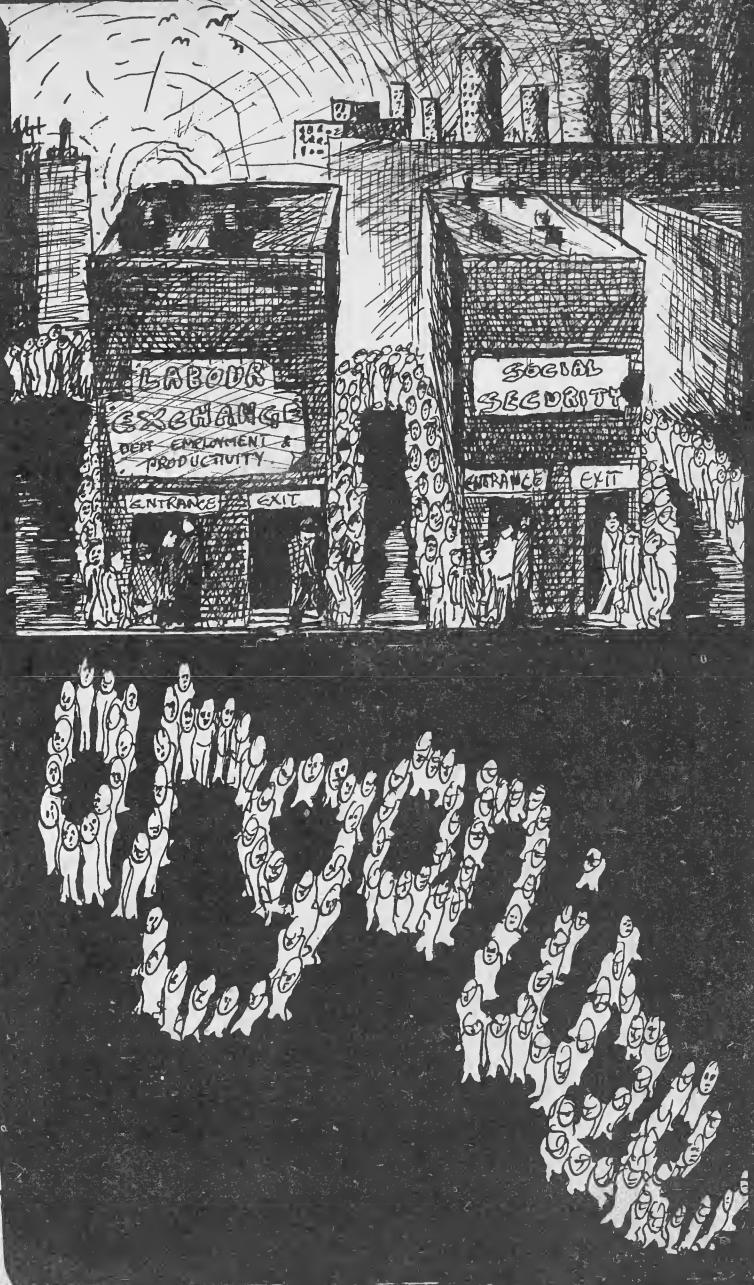


## Ulster

For the past two issues the Peoples Group who produce this paper have felt the need to comment on the situation in Ireland. The group, however have found this somewhat difficult due to the complexities of the struggle that is going on there, and to our own inability to understand and analyse that struggle. So we have decided to publish the Provisions of the Special Powers Act (1924). We hope that this at least will give our readers some idea of what life is like inside a part of the British Isles in the Autumn of 1971. Under the Special Powers Act (1924) Northern Ireland, the authorities are legally able to:

- 1 Arrest without a warrant
- 2 Imprison without charge or trial and deny recourse to 'habeas corpus' or a court of law
- 3 Enter and search homes without warrant, and with force, at any hours of day and night
- 4 Declare a curfew and prohibit meetings, or assemblies (including fairs and processions) or even markets
- 5 Permit punishment by flogging
- 6 Deny any claim to trial by jury
- 7 Arrest persons it is desired to examine as witnesses, forcibly detain them and compel them to answer questions, under penalties, even if the answers may incriminate them. Such a person is guilty of an offence if he refuses to be sworn or to answer a question
- 8 Prevent access of relatives or legal advice to a person imprisoned without trial
- 9 Arrest a person who 'by word of mouth' spreads reports or makes false statements
- 10 Prohibit the circulation of any newspaper
- 11 Prohibit the possession of any film or gramophone record
- 12 Arrest a person who does ANYTHING 'calculated to be prejudicial to the preservation of peace or maintenance of order in Northern Ireland and not specifically provided for in the regulations'

This Act is in force at this moment in Ireland. How long will it be before it is brought into force in Britain?



### Local Organisations

**Hackney Trades Council**, c/o 58 Warburton House, London Fields, N.16.

**Hackney Committee Against Racism**, c/o secretary, 194 Queensbridge Rd, E.8.

**Black Unity and Freedom Party**, c/o 31 Belgrave Road, N.16.

**North London Alliance in Defence of Workers Rights**, 34 Tabley Road, N.4.

**Stoke Newington Peoples Association**, c/o Centreprise, 34 Dalston Lane (254 1620)